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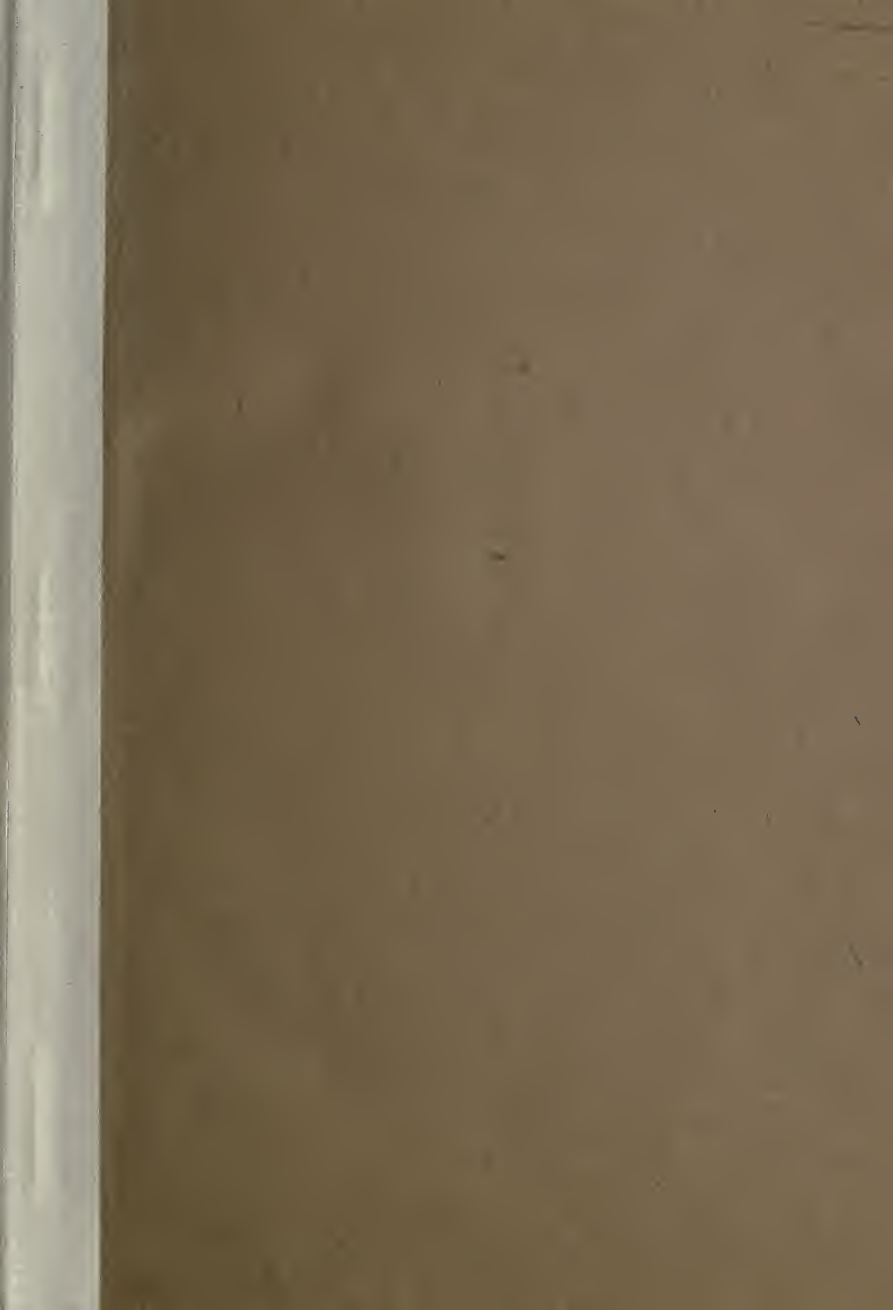


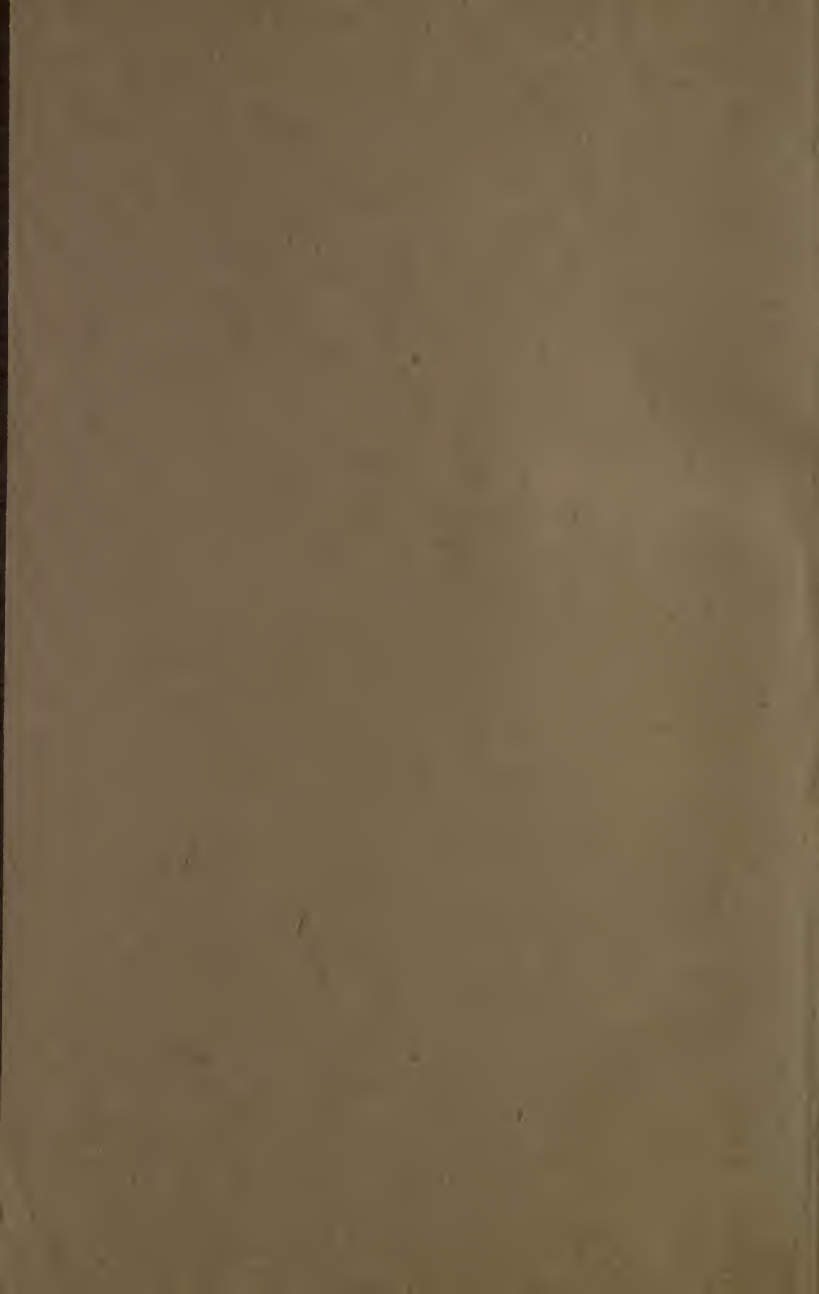
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FAMILY LIMITATION

AND

The Church and Birth Control

BY

JOHN A. RYAN, S.T.D.

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We are indebted to the courtesy of the Editor of *The Ecclesiastical Review* for permission to republish Dr. Ryan's paper on *Family Limitation*, and to that of the Editor of *America* to republish the same author's *The Church and Birth Control*.

FAMILY LIMITATION

WITHIN the last two years certain periodicals have given currency to such compounds as "birth-control," "birth-restriction," "contraceptives," and "contraception." These terms have been invented to popularize the discussion of topics that had previously been confined to the pages of medical and ethical treatises. They represent an attempt to translate the language of a technical subject into journalese. The underlying purpose, however, has not been mainly academic. It has been rather to make known and recommend to the poorer classes devices for the limitation of their families.

Fortunately there is no possibility of a legitimate difference of opinion on this subject among Catholics. To persons who seek advice or information concerning these practices the confessor can give only one answer. To all objections, criticisms, and questionings he can and must set forth the adverse decision of the Church. He is neither required nor permitted to decide the question on the basis of his own fallible opinion.

While this fact reassures his conscience and simplifies his task, it does not always give complete satisfaction. In this as in many other matters of doctrine and discipline, the priest is often called upon to vindicate the Church's attitude, to justify the ways of God to men. If all Catholics recognized that devices for the prevention of birth were grievously sinful, the situation would be relatively simple. Those who offended in this respect

would always be confronted by their own accusing consciences, while the priest would have no greater nor essentially different task than if he were dealing with the violators of justice or temperance. Misled, however, by the wrong notions prevalent among their Non-Catholic neighbors, and confused by the inherent moral difficulties of the situation, some Catholics have been able to persuade themselves that contraceptive practices are not necessarily sinful, at least in certain extreme cases. In many cities the number of children per family among Catholics of the middle and comfortable classes is little more than half the average that obtained in the families of their parents. A small part of the difference may be due to later marriages and the diminished fecundity that possibly results from city life. Is the greater share of the decline to be ascribed to a conscious violation of the moral law? a deliberate and persistent intention of committing mortal sin? Our acquaintance with many of these families impels us to answer if possible these questions in the negative, and to choose the hypothesis of wrong conduct in good faith. We prefer to think that they are obstinately unconvinced rather than that they sin grievously and repeatedly with their eyes open. Hence, there seems to be a considerable need of intelligent instruction as well as uncompromising statement of the law.

Non-Catholics sometimes assume that the Church forbids family limitation by any means whatever. They seem to think that the main object of the Church in her legislation on this subject is the greatest possible increase in population. Apparently they are unaware that it is not the deliberate control of births, but the positive and unnatural means to this end that falls under the Church's

condemnation. Against parents who keep their families small by chaste abstention from marital intercourse the Church has not a word to say.

That all positive methods of birth prevention (abortion and all the so-called contraceptives) are condemned by the Church as grievous sins, is evident from the long list of official declarations on the subject during the nineteenth century by the Roman Congregations. These merely reaffirm and make more precise the traditional discipline as proclaimed in Holy Scripture, and in patristic and theological literature.¹

What is the rational ground of this condemnation? The fact that all these devices constitute the immoral perversion of a human faculty. According to natural reason, the primary and fundamental criterion of good and bad is human nature adequately considered. Actions which are in harmony with nature are good; those which are not in harmony with nature are bad. Now, to exercise a faculty in such a way as to prevent it from attaining its natural end or object is to act contrary to nature.

The application of this principle to the subject of contraceptives is obvious. The generative faculty has as its specific and essential end the procreation of offspring. That is the object which explains and rationalizes this particular faculty. When the faculty is so used that the very use of it renders the fulfillment of its very purpose impossible, it is perverted, used unnaturally, and therefore sinfully. Such perversion of the generative faculty is on exactly the same moral level, and is wrong for precisely the same reason as the practice of the solitary

¹A fairly satisfactory discussion of the whole subject will be found in the work by the Right Rev. M. B. Nardi, O.M.C., entitled, *Dissertatio de Sanctitate Matrimonii Vindicata*. Romae, 1907.

vice. In either case the immorality consists in the fact that a function is performed in such a way as to frustrate its natural end. "The rule not to use a faculty in such a way as to oppose the realization of its natural end is universally and absolutely valid. There is not a single exception to it. To use a faculty in such a way as to make its natural end impossible of realization is intrinsically unnatural and bad. There could be no more direct and unequivocal violation of nature than this. It is a complete perversion of nature's purposes and needs."²

Observe that to use a faculty perversely and unnaturally is not the same thing as to use it so as to regulate nature, or improve upon nature. Cutting one's hair is in a sense a correction of nature, but the action perverts no function, nor frustrates any natural end, either of human nature as a whole or of the particular faculties involved in the process.

Now, I am very well aware that the fundamental ethical principle which has just been summarily stated, does not appeal to those persons who take as the basic criterion of right and wrong happiness, or utility, or some form of individual or social welfare. Their first reply would probably be that the principle at the basis of the Catholic view is metaphysical. In their opinion this characterization would be a sufficient condemnation. Yes; the principle is metaphysical. It is based upon intrinsic grounds, upon the necessary and essential relations between functions and ends, and not at all upon considerations of utility or consequences. Being metaphysical and intrinsic, the principle is incapable of demonstration by recourse to experience. If it is not self-evident, it is not convincing.

²Cronin, *The Science of Ethics*, p. 130.

But I would remind these objectors that their principle of right and wrong is also metaphysical. If it is not, it is utterly irrational. No principle or proposition can be established by an infinite series of references to further principles. Somewhere a limit must be set, and this limit must be taken as self-evident. Hence, if social utility is set up as the standard of morality, it must be accepted on faith. It cannot be proved. If a man tells me that such and such actions are bad because they conflict with social utility, and I ask him to prove that social utility is necessarily a good thing, he is unable to go further back or deeper down. He must assume that social utility is good in itself, intrinsically good. Thus, his fundamental position takes the form of a metaphysical principle. In this respect we are on equal footing.

While no intelligent defender of the criterion of social utility, or race welfare, will deny that it is quite as incapable of demonstration as the criterion of rational nature, many of them contend that it is more easily acceptable, more convincing on its face. To say that social welfare is the determinant of right and wrong, that actions are good in so far as they promote this end, and bad in so far as they hinder it, is to make a statement which harmonizes with our concrete, flesh-and-blood interests and emotions. It appeals to our feelings as well as to our intellects. On the other hand, the doctrine that an action is bad merely because it misuses a faculty, is too remote and abstract to make a very moving impression. It appeals to our intellect exclusively, receiving no assistance from the imagination or feelings. Inasmuch as we are not creatures of pure intellect, our response to the appeal of this abstract principle is

necessarily less feeble than is the case when the sense element of our nature is interested. When the objector asks: "What real harm is done even though a faculty is used perversely, so long as no injury occurs to health, to mind, or to the neighbor?" we can only answer: "The moral order is violated; the intrinsic relations between faculty and function are wantonly ignored; the sanctity of nature is outraged; the natural law of human organism is transgressed." These statements are, indeed, more fundamental and more important in God's scheme of things than such passing and superficial facts as health and sickness, wealth and poverty, pleasure and pain; but they are sadly lacking in realism when they fall upon ears that are not accustomed to intrinsic truths and metaphysical propositions.

In the case of contraceptive practices, the intrinsic reasoning is happily reënforced by powerful arguments from consequences. Though this is not always evident in the individual instance, it is sufficiently clear in the long run. Such devices are debasing to those who employ them, inasmuch as they lead inevitably to loss of reverence for the marital relation, loss of respect for the conjugal partner, and loss of faith in the sacredness of the nuptial bond. Obviously this statement cannot be proved by specific evidence, or the experience of particular married couples, but must depend upon our general knowledge of human psychology. Here, however, is the testimony of one expert, Dr. Howard A. Kelly of the Johns Hopkins medical school and hospital, who is one of the country's greatest gynecologists: "Practically, I find that the people who come to me having used various mechanical devices of preventing conception, have lost something in their married life which

ought to have been more precious to them than life itself. All meddling with the sexual relation to secure facultative sterility degrades the wife to the level of a prostitute."³

The limitation of families through these practices is injurious to the race. It leads inevitably to an increase of softness, luxury and materialism, and to a decrease of mental and moral discipline, of endurance, and of the power of achievement. To-day, as always, right and reasonable life consists in knowing the best that is to be known, and in loving the best that is to be loved; and this means preferring the rational self to the animal self, the altruistic things to the egoistic things. To-day, as always, deeds worth while are accomplished only at the cost of continuous and considerable sacrifice, of compelling ourselves to do without the immediate and pleasant goods for the sake of the remote and permanent goods. Says Dr. Chatterton-Hill, the distinguished sociologist of the University of Geneva, in *The Sociological Value of Christianity* (p. 160): "The continuity of social existence is conditioned by society conforming itself to the great law of struggle and suffering; and the path which the individual must follow, if he is to attain to moral perfection, and through moral perfection to salvation, is likewise the path of struggle and suffering."

Now the practice of contraception springs from and in turn greatly reënforces a diametrically opposite theory of life values. Its impelling principle is dislike of sacrifice and disinclination to painful effort; its dominating aim is the indefinite increase and variation of pleasant physical sensations. The atmosphere that it creates and fosters is an atmosphere of ease, egotism, materialism,

³See *Harper's Weekly*, October 16, 1915.

which is generally fatal to the development of those moral qualities which are essential to high mental discipline, disinterested service of the neighbor, self-denying application, and the sustained pursuit of any great and beneficent ideal.

The small-family advocates never weary of assuring us that in the matter of children quality is better than quantity. But their policy is injurious to both. In the majority of small families, the superior intellectual and material opportunities are more than neutralized by the moral disadvantages and losses, in the form of egotism, inefficiency, indolence and over-indulgence.

An article on "the Only Child" in *The Century Magazine* for November, 1915, describes the manifold inferiority of "only children," as disclosed by an investigation of several hundred such persons. The great majority of them are "lamentably arrogant and selfish," "reach manhood and womanhood sadly handicapped and markedly inferior to other children," are unusually "nervous," "excessively occupied with thoughts of self," and in general "grow up deficient in initiative and self-reliance." Common observation seems to show that these defects of the "only child" afflict in only a lesser degree the children of two- and three-child families. The main cause of the defects, a wrong theory of welfare involving a bad system of domestic training, accounts for and is present in the majority of small families, whether the number of children be one, two, or three.

To be sure, it is not possible to give a mathematical demonstration of the proposition that the small-family system means moral and social decadence. The case must rest upon an interpretation of general facts and tendencies, as observed in everyday life, and upon the

general lessons of history and psychology regarding nations and individuals that have devoted themselves to the pursuit of ease and the shirking of difficulties. Professor Ellwood tells us, in *The Social Problem*, that "materialistic standards of life" are the dominant feature of and the greatest menace to our civilization. Now, the man who does not see that contraceptive practices are at once the effect and the powerfully reacting cause of these standards, is either ignorant, or myopic, or prejudiced.

There is no intention here of asserting that materialistic ideals and social inefficiency affect all small families. Where the number of children is small despite the desires of the parents, the moral perceptions of the latter are healthy; where the number is kept small through sexual abstinence, the moral ideals of the parents and their capacity to subordinate the lower to the higher self will suffice to withstand the forces of materialism; where the husband and wife are unusually strong in character and in their convictions of the worth of the higher life, they will often be able to avoid the normal results of contraceptive practices. But the latter are obviously exceptions to the general rule governing their class.

On the other hand, I do not deny that the majority of the families of unskilled workingmen would have sufficient opportunities of self-discipline if the number of their children were narrowly limited. But the policy cannot be restricted to such families. It is already much more prevalent among the middle classes and the rich than among the poor; and if the latter should adopt it, they, too, would desire to continue it after they had improved their financial position. Thus, the whole of society would become vitiated. It is yet possible to let

the working-classes function as the "saving remnant" of civilization.

So much for the deterioration in racial quality. There is likewise a real danger to quantity. In France, where the practice of family limitation has been in operation longest, the population has been for some years practically at a standstill. It would already have undergone a considerable decline had it not been greatly strengthened by the large families in the genuinely Catholic sections of the country, and materially supplemented by immigration from the neighboring countries.

Should the small-family cult become general throughout the Western world, it would undoubtedly bring the other countries to the condition of France. They would all then be confronted by one of three choices: a declining population; a population kept up only by immigration from the Orient; or depopulation avoided only by the unusually large families of Catholics.

Advocates of limitation ^{of birth} sometimes manipulates statistics in such a way as to insinuate, without explicitly asserting, that the general decline in the birth rate is offset by the decline in the death rate, and that the former is the cause of the latter. The fact is that those countries in which the birth rate has become lowest have not, with one or two unimportant exceptions, reduced their death rate to an equal extent. And the main cause of the decreasing death rate is the improvement in medicine and hygiene and in the economic condition of the masses during the last twenty-five or thirty years. France has a much lower birth rate, but a considerably higher death rate, than Prussia.⁴

⁴See the table, p. 8, in Dr. Newsholme's *The Declining Birth Rate*; also Thompson's *Population*, pp. 104-109.

Are the great masses of underpaid laborers to be forbidden to raise their remuneration through the simple device of lowering their birth rate? Emphatically, yes. The end does not justify the intrinsically immoral means, the practice of contraception. The condition of the poorer classes would not be genuinely improved through the adoption of devices and ideals which make inevitably for egotism and materialism.

Moreover, it is not at all certain that the immediate aim, the diminution of the unskilled section of the population, would be as effective as its advocates assume. The laboring masses of France, who quite generally restrict their numbers artificially, are not so well paid as those of Germany.⁵ The excessive size of the group of the unskilled laborers could be reduced to normal proportions by industrial education—to say nothing of immigration restriction—by improving their earning power instead of forbidding them to live normal family lives.

In general, the proper remedy is a better distribution of our industrial opportunities and products. Dr. Ingram tells us in *A History of Political Economy* (p. 121) that the teaching of Malthus was very welcome to the higher ranks of society because it “tended to relieve the rich and powerful of responsibility for the condition of the working classes, by showing that the latter had chiefly themselves to blame, and not either the negligence of their superiors or the institutions of the country.”

History seems to be repeating itself in this matter. Not only the “rich and powerful,” but some of our economists would fasten upon the working classes the

⁵Fifteenth Annual Report of the United States Commissioner of Labor.

guilty responsibility for their insufficient incomes. In his recent work on the *Wealth and Income of the People of the United States*, Professor W. I. King declares that the ultimate blame for low wages must be laid, not upon employers, "but upon the parents and grandparents of the workers themselves. Why did these ancestors of the present generation bring into the world children whom they could afford neither to educate nor to train for some occupation the products of which were sufficiently in demand to make a living wage easily secured? Why indeed! Simply because these same parents were either incompetent, ignorant, or unwilling to restrain their animal passions. Here we have an excellent example of 'visiting the iniquity of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth generations'" (p. 250). This statement is not only shallow and inhuman, but disgustingly pharisaical; for it intimates that these ancestors, who make sacrifices of all sorts to care for all the children that God sent them, exercised less sexual self-control than those more cultured persons who limit the number of their offspring; whereas, it is notorious that most of the latter employ devices that increase rather than restrict facilities for indulging the "animal passions."

Professor King admits, indeed, that if the present national income, which he estimates as averaging \$1,494 per family or \$332 per individual annually, were equally or almost equally divided among the population, it would provide a decent livelihood for all; but he contends that if this were done the poor would multiply more rapidly, and in a few years be as badly off as before. Professor Thompson goes further, and asserts that population cannot continue to increase at even the present rate, "without being more and more subjected to the actual want

of food.”⁶ Indeed, the latter’s thesis is that Malthus was essentially correct in maintaining that population would increase faster than subsistence unless retarded by positive checks.

Are these forecasts sound? If they are, what is the remedy? Is it prolonged or permanent celibacy for large sections of the population, and extended periods of conjugal abstinence for great numbers of married couples? None of these questions can be adequately answered in the closing paragraphs of this pamphlet. We shall not attempt to do more than state the various elements of the situation.

Despite the pessimistic predictions of ~~Malthus~~, the food supply per capita is much more abundant to-day than it was when he wrote his *Essay on Population*. It is very much greater than it was ~~sixty~~ years after his book was published. According to the computations of Professor King, the average annual income for each person in the United States was only \$116 in 1860, as against \$332 in 1910.⁷ Would the latter ratio have been maintained if race suicide had been unknown, and if practically all females above twenty years of age had married? We know that the birth rate of the native element in our population has declined very considerably in the last half century, and the last census tells us that in 1910 there were in the country approximately five million females of twenty years of age and over who were unmarried. The law of diminishing returns would seem to give a negative answer to the question just asked. Professor Thompson’s study seems to show that the additional labor of these potential millions would not

⁶*Population: A Study in Malthusianism*, p. 163.

⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 129.

have been able to draw from the land as large a product per worker as the labor that was actually engaged. Besides, the quantity of unproductive children would have formed a much greater proportion of the population than is the case at present. Each producer would have had to feed a larger number of consumers.

The main reason of the failure of Malthus' prophecy was the improved methods of production, which have enabled the individual laborer to get out of the earth a much larger supply of food than was possible in 1798. May we not expect this process to go on indefinitely, always keeping well ahead of the increase of population? Professor Thompson says no. "The agricultural development which came as a result of rapid transportation, the invention of labor-saving farm machinery, and the abundance of new and fertile lands cannot be duplicated."⁸ This is a more or less reasonable conjecture. It is not a certainty. Perhaps new methods of production will be discovered as far superior to those of the present as the latter are to the ones that Malthus knew. On the other hand, perhaps large numbers of persons will some day be obliged to choose between temporary or permanent celibacy and long periods of abstinence within the marital union. Here we are on uncertain ground. What we know is that for the present there is no occasion to worry. Enough of the good things of life is produced to give all our people a decent living, if they were reasonably and justly distributed. Sensible persons will not cross the bridge of overpopulation until they come to it.

⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 130.

THE CHURCH AND BIRTH CONTROL

In a recent issue of a popular magazine a Protestant clergyman expresses his frank agreement with the doctrine of the Catholic Church on the subject of family limitation, and his earnest hope that this doctrine will prevail throughout society. He believes, however, that the Church should go further. He would have her promote race betterment by refusing to sanction marriages of the unfit, and encourage large families by raising her voice in favor of a better distribution of wealth.

The marriage of defective and subnormal persons is a very complex subject, and therefore cannot be adequately treated in a short pamphlet. The most that can be done here is to say a word on each of the more important phases of the question. ~~In the first place,~~ The Church always looks upon the spiritual and moral side of individuals and institutions as much more important than their physical aspects or consequences. She regards marriage as a considerable aid to right living in the case of the majority of persons, and she thinks of the offspring not merely as a more or less perfect organism, but as a person possessing a spiritual and immortal soul. Hence she desires that the individual should have the fullest practicable and reasonable liberty with regard to marriage; she counts the earthly existence of a helpless cripple, a chronic invalid, or a mental weakling intrinsically good, and she knows that all such persons are capable of a life of eternal happiness face to face with God. Consequently her viewpoint is infinitely removed from that of those practical atheists who measure the worth of a subnormal person by the same standard that they apply to a dog or a horse. While the Church is not unmindful of the interests of society and the welfare

of the race, she is not yet convinced that these have been sufficiently endangered to justify her in denying to large classes of individuals the rights and privileges of normal life. As a matter of fact, "the welfare of the race" is in the minds of the majority of persons who use the phrase a mere abstraction that corresponds to no definite idea; or it means the welfare of the fortunate majority who do not desire the inconvenience of helping to support any considerable number of defectives.

In conformity with her doctrines concerning the right of the individual to marry, the worth of the human person, and the sacredness of the human soul, the Church has never established any impediment to matrimony on the mere ground of the kind of offspring that might be expected to result. She sanctioned the marriage of lepers even when the social presence of such persons was looked upon as a grave danger to the community. While she forbids the marriage of insane persons, the reason is not to be found in the quality of the children, but in the fundamental circumstance that the parents are incapable of making a binding contract.

Now this position of the Church is entirely reasonable, and in the long run socially beneficial. Suppose that the Church were willing to forbid the marriage of all defectives on the ground that their offspring would be subnormal. Two questions would then arise. What is a defective? And what kinds of defectiveness are hereditary? Some of the eugenists would favor so broad an interpretation of defectiveness as to take in a very large proportion of the population, probably a majority of our ordinary, undistinguished citizens. They would include all those classes that they are pleased to call "inferior types," restricting the privilege of marriage to the super-

man and superwoman. This would be a fine thing for society, that is, for the supermen and superwomen, who alone would constitute society! However, let us assume that a rational definition of defectiveness were adopted, that only those persons would be included who were in a very pronounced way, subnormal, either physically, mentally, or morally. We should then be confronted with the second question. Do these persons really transmit their disabilities to their offspring? In the midst of the enormous ignorance, the absurd exaggeration, and the conflicting opinions surrounding this question, the ordinary person hesitates to set down any definite answer. Nevertheless, there are three propositions which, if not absolutely conclusive, are at present incapable of disproof. First, the only hereditary mental defects are insanity and feeble-mindedness; second, the only physical defects of any significance that are even probably handed down by the generative process are alcoholic degeneration and the deterioration resulting from certain chronic venereal diseases; third, there is not sufficient evidence to create even a slight probability that moral degeneracy as such is transmissible to the offspring.

In this situation the present attitude of the Church toward the marriage of the "unfit" is clearly the only prudent, fair, and reasonable attitude. The more pronounced victims of feeble-mindedness are either segregated from society, and therefore prevented from marrying by the State, or their condition is so obvious that, even should they be capable of a contract, not many of them would enter upon it. After all, it is possible for the clergy to discourage and prevent undesirable unions by the exercise of common sense and tact in individual cases, without the need or aid of a rigid ecclesiastical

prohibition. This would be done. And in the present unsatisfactory state of our knowledge on the whole subject of heredity, this informal method of dealing with certain and pronounced cases of feeble-mindedness is both fair to the individual and sufficiently effective for the interests of society. The less pronounced cases of feeble-mindedness should be given the benefit of the presumption that these persons have a right to marry, and that the amount of mental defectiveness which they will transmit is not of serious social importance. As to the only other classes involved; namely, alcoholic and venereal degenerates, they would certainly be strongly discouraged from marrying by any priest, not so much on account of the assumed transmissibility of these defects as for the sake of the welfare and happiness of the married persons themselves.

It is not impossible that the Church may some day institute a new matrimonial impediment which will exclude those whose union is a social danger. But it is certain that she will take no such step until the laws of heredity are much better understood than they are at present, and the danger to society from inherited defects is much greater both in depth and in volume than it appears to be in the light of existing scientific information. She has had a long history, and has witnessed the rise and fall of innumerable social theories; hence she is disposed to be cautious and patient, to submit each new proposal to the rigorous test of adequate knowledge and experience, and to refuse to be stampeded into making radical changes in her legislation at the behest of every novel theory that proclaims itself to be scientific. And it is well for both the individual and the race that she is thus cautious and conservative, aye, and

scientific in the true sense ~~of that term~~. It is well that she refuses to take theories for established facts in such a vital matter as the liberty of the individual to fulfill one of the two primary demands of his nature. It is better to concede too much to individual liberty than to exaggerate the interests and claims of society. The latter course leads inevitably to the aggrandizement of one section of the population at the expense of another section, and to such a volume of dissension, lawlessness, social expense, and individual demoralization as to leave the latter state of society worse than the first. How easily disregard of individual rights and hasty generalizations concerning the welfare of society may issue in mistaken and harmful legislation, is seen in the movement for the sterilization of defectives and habitual criminals. Within the last ten years several of our States have enacted laws to carry out this extremely radical proposal. Yet the best scientific opinion now holds in the words of Professor Ellwood⁹ that this "is dangerous or at least a questionable law."

A considerable proportion of the public easily assumes that certain things are conclusively proved just because somebody who pretends to have expert knowledge asserts that they are true, and calls them "scientific." One of the most ludicrous and amazing instances of this shallowness is furnished by "Judge" Henry Neil, who is glorified in certain quarters as the "Father of Mothers' Pensions." He maintains that these pensions should be extended to deserted wives because only bad fathers desert, and society should not desire bad fathers to remain with their wives and beget feeble-minded children!¹⁰ The learned Judge calmly assumes that the kind of bad-

⁹*The Social Problem*, p. 129.

¹⁰*The Public*, October 8, 1915.

ness which impels husbands to desert is a species of feeble-mindedness, and that it is hereditary. No doubt his assumption is based upon some solemn assertion to this effect by some pretended expert, and no doubt many other superficial persons will adopt the same view because it has been dogmatically voiced by Judge Neil. Let us thank God that the mind of the Church is more critical and scientific!

Concerning the duty of the Church to "raise her voice for a more equitable distribution," in order that all parents may have the means to bring up a family of normal size, two points deserve brief consideration. First the rearing of a large family is, indeed, a grievous hardship in the case of a large section of our working people, and it is the duty of the Church to proclaim, and as far as practicable to enforce the moral right of all such persons to the economic requisites of decent family life. But the Church has done and is doing this very thing. It is now almost a quarter of a century since Pope Leo XIII. laid down the doctrine that the laborer has a strict natural right to a wage that will enable him to live in reasonable and frugal comfort; and the document in which he published this teaching indicates in more than one place that the Pope had in mind the needs of a family, not merely the personal needs of the laboring head of the family. Were this teaching heeded no parent could truthfully assert that he was limiting the size of his family on account of economic necessity. That the doctrine has not been so widely and continuously disseminated and followed as it should have been, is unhappily true; but we must bear in mind that the application of it to concrete cases is often extremely difficult, and that our industrial organization is bewilderingly

complex. In the meantime more and more is being done to give publicity and effect to this far-reaching truth that all who labor have a moral right to the goods that are necessary for reasonable family life. Our ecclesiastical seminaries, and colleges, and universities are giving courses of instruction on social questions, study clubs and lectures on the same subject are increasing in number and scope, and day by day the number of persons is rapidly growing who are coming to realize that a better distribution of the world's goods is of vital moral importance.

In the second place, it is easily possible to exaggerate the relation between a decent livelihood and decent conjugal conditions. As a matter of fact, the abominable practices that make for race suicide are much more in vogue among those persons that have sufficient goods for reasonable living than among those who are below this level. Not the desire to live decently but the desire to live luxuriously and indolently, is the main force impelling men and women to these disgusting devices. So far as such persons are concerned, a better distribution of goods would not improve matters at all. On the other hand, if all the workers were in receipt of decent wages, and if they were to adopt contraceptive devices in the same proportion as the middle classes and the rich, the evil that we deplore would be more widespread by far than it is at present. The plain truth is that the evil is fundamentally moral rather than economic. It has its roots in a wrong view of life, and of what constitutes a worthy and reasonable life. This false philosophy of life can be eradicated only by sound moral education, and one of the most effective elements in such an education is the unyielding teaching and attitude of the Church.

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